



“Human predators populate our society.”

Stefan Verstappen, Defense Against the Psychopath

Psychopaths are human predators. They coerce, manipulate, lie, steal, defraud, abuse, and take life, without feeling guilt or remorse. A leading expert on psychopathy, Robert Hare, estimates that 1% of people are psychopaths; while the clinical psychologist Martha Stout suggests this figure is closer to 4%. Studies indicate that psychopaths are over-represented in the corporate executive world and in politics. In this video we are going to explore the psychology of the psychopath as this knowledge can help us minimize the damage they inflict on us, those we care about, and humanity at large.

“...compared with other major clinical disorders, little systematic research has been devoted to psychopathy, even though it is responsible for far more social distress and disruption than all other psychiatric disorders combined. Psychopaths are found in every segment of society, and there is a good chance that...you will have a painful or humiliating encounter with one. Your best defense is to understand the nature of these human predators.”

Robert Hare, Without Conscience

Individuals such as Ted Bundy, Charles Manson or Jeffrey Dahmer are who come to mind when most people think of the psychopath and while such individuals are psychopathic, they represent an extreme of this disorder. Most psychopaths, rather than committing violent crimes, engage in immoral acts that fly under the radar of the criminal justice system; they will abuse family

members, or neglect their well-being, they will cheat others out of money, pathologically lie, or manipulate others for selfish ends.

“...many people know nothing about this disorder, or if they do, they think only in terms of...people who have conspicuously broken the law many times over, and who, if caught, will be imprisoned...most [psychopaths] are not incarcerated. They are out here in the world with you and me.”

Martha Stout, The Sociopath Next Door

The reason most of us refrain from routinely exploiting and harming others is because we possess a conscience. We empathize with the suffering of others, and if we make another suffer, we feel guilt. Psychopaths have no conscience, and they lack the ability to feel empathy and guilt. In fact, a psychopath does not feel love, friendship, or any emotional connection to anyone at all. If psychopaths maintain ties to other people, it is only because they see them as a possession, resource or tool. This emotionless void which exists in the heart of the psychopath makes them capable of repeatedly engaging in acts that harm other people.

“Even experienced and case-hardened professionals find it unnerving when they see a psychopath’s reaction to a gut-wrenching event or listen to him or her casually describe a brutal offense as if an apple had been peeled or a fish gutted.”

Robert Hare, Without Conscience

Or as he continues:

“[The psychopath is] a self-centered, callous, and remorseless person profoundly lacking in empathy and the ability to form warm emotional relationships with others, a person who functions without the restraints of conscience. If you think about it, you will realize that what is missing in this picture are the very qualities that allow human beings to live in social harmony.”

Robert Hare, Without Conscience

In place of the emotional connections which create meaning in the lives of normal people, the internal life of the psychopath is driven by the pleasure-principle and the need for continual excitement. Many psychopaths are alcoholics, addicted to drugs or sex, and engage in highly risky behaviors. But the most seductive stimulant for a psychopath is power. No matter whether they are a career criminal, an unemployed freeloader, a middle manager, a CEO, a financier, bureaucrat, or politician, the mind of the psychopath is obsessed with controlling other people. Or as Martha Stout explains:

“The prize to be won can run the gamut from world domination to a free lunch, but it is always the same game—controlling, making others jump, “winning.””

Martha Stout, The Sociopath Next Door

Robert Hare shares a snippet from a psychological report about a psychopath named Earl:

“The most salient thing about Earl is his obsession with absolute power. He values people only insofar as they bend to his will or can be coerced or manipulated into doing

what he wants. He constantly sizes up his prospects for exploiting people and situations.”

Robert Hare, Without Conscience

While from our vantage point the psychopath is suffering from a severe mental disorder, psychopaths see nothing wrong with themselves and are sometimes forthright in stating that their “condition” is a blessing. Their lack of emotional attachments and inability to feel empathy and guilt grant them an unprecedented advantage in what is a dog-eat-dog world – or so they say. Ted Bundy, for example, referred to guilt as an “unhealthy social control mechanism” that “does terrible things to the body.” Given that they see their psychopathy as a benefit, it should come as no surprise that attempts to “rehabilitate” psychopaths fail miserably. In summarizing the literature on the so-called “treatments” for psychopathy, Robert Hare explains:

“...many writers on the subject have commented that the shortest chapter in any book on psychopathy should be the one on treatment. A one-sentence conclusion such as, “No effective treatment has been found,” or, “Nothing works,” is the common wrap-up to scholarly reviews of the literature.”

Robert Hare, Without Conscience

To make matters worse, psychopaths are notoriously difficult to identify. For although inwardly they are as different from us as night and day, outwardly they camouflage their predatory nature with what the 20th century psychiatrist Hervey Cleckley called a “mask of sanity”. Psychopaths are akin to predatory creatures who mimic the appearance and behaviour of their prey. In his article *Snake in the Grass*, the psychologist Daniel Jones explains that: “*There are spiders in Australia that smell and behave like ants: some are so convincing that the ants will allow a spider to live permanently as one of them. This spider will then feast upon its new friends, but it won’t eat all the ants, or even a significant number; instead, it extracts resources slowly, sustainably, and over time.*” (Daniel Jones, *Snake in the Grass*)

Like the Australian spider, on the social stage psychopaths often appear normal. In fact, they tend to be more charismatic, charming, and confident than most people. This social allure is partially a function of the fact that psychopaths experience far less stress, fear, and anxiety than the rest of us. But it is also the result of the psychopath’s remarkable capacity to lie about their past, their achievements, and their character in a manner which mesmerizes, and sometimes psychologically paralyzes, their victims.

“Most of the victims I have known in my work have reported that their initial involvement with a [psychopathic] person, and their continued association even though she or he caused them pain, was a direct result of how charming she or he could be. Countless times, I have watched people shake their heads and make statements such as, “He was the most charming person I ever met,” or “I felt like I’d known her forever,” or “He had an energy about him that other people just don’t have.”

Martha Stout, The Sociopath Next Door

Luckily, there are cracks in the psychopath’s mask of sanity. One of these cracks is a pathologically inflated sense of self-importance, which psychopaths find impossible to hide. Or as Robert Hare explains:

“Psychopaths have a narcissistic and grossly inflated view of their self-worth and importance, a truly astounding egocentricity and sense of entitlement, and see themselves as the center of the universe, as superior beings who are justified in living according to their own rules.”

Robert Hare, Without Conscience

The eyes of a psychopath can also reveal their predatory nature, as some victims report that looking into the eyes of a psychopath is akin to looking into the eyes of a reptile; no matter their mood, their eyes are the same – empty, cold, intense, and unsettling. This commonality between the eyes of a psychopath and the eyes of a reptile is one of the sources of the contemporary myth that there exists a race of reptilian humanoids.

“Some people respond to the emotionless stare of the psychopath with considerable discomfort, almost as if they feel like potential prey in the presence of a predator. Others may be completely overwhelmed and intimidated, perhaps even controlled, with little insight into what is happening to them. Whatever the psychological meaning of their gaze, it is clear that intense eye contact is an important factor in the ability of some psychopaths to manipulate and dominate others.”

Martha Stout, The Sociopath Next Door

Another way to see through the psychopath’s mask of sanity is to pay attention to their manner of speaking. Psychopaths find it difficult to maintain a coherent narrative; their statements are often contradictory and littered with inconsistencies. They tend to jump from one unrelated topic to the next, and when asked a question they are known to respond in a way that is irrelevant to what was asked.

“Psychopaths are notorious for not answering the question posed them or for answering in a way that seems unresponsive to the question.”

Robert Hare, Without Conscience

Some psychopaths also accompany their speech with exaggerated hand movements. Researchers believe the hand movements of a psychopath are a function of how their brain processes words, ideas, and emotions. But the hand movements also function as a deceptive strategy; they distract listeners and make it harder to catch onto their inconsistencies and lies. Regarding one psychopath undergoing a psychological assessment, Robert Hare explained:

“His narrative was accompanied by expansive hand movements and exaggerated facial expressions—a dramatic display that blinded our interviewer to what was happening.”

Robert Hare, Without Conscience

The root cause of psychopathy is unknown, but studies indicate that psychopaths are born with a predisposition to psychopathy; they are, in other words, a product of nature, not nurture.

“...there is no convincing body of findings linking the core characteristic of [psychopathy]—that is, the absence of conscience—with childhood maltreatment...In fact, there is some evidence that [psychopaths] are influenced less by their early experience than are [nonpsychopaths].”

Martha Stout, The Sociopath Next Door

While psychopaths have plagued all societies throughout history, the problem of their existence is amplified by contemporary trends toward political centralization. Governments are reaching their tentacles into ever more areas of life, global institutions are attempting to place the entire globe under the same yoke of tyranny, and developments in technology are creating the potential for a form of totalitarian rule that is far more invasive than anything that has come before. As psychopaths crave power, as they are naturally charismatic, skilled liars, and unconstrained by empathy, fear, anxiety, and guilt, it is reasonable to surmise that some psychopaths gravitate towards, or are actively established in, positions of political power. In his book *Political Ponerology*, the Polish psychiatrist Andrzej Łobaczewski proposed the name pathocracy for the type of political system in which psychopaths rule, and unless more people are aware of the threat of this predatory class, this type of rule may become a full-blown reality.

“I shall accept the denomination of pathocracy for a system of government...wherein a small pathological minority takes control over a society of normal people....if an individual in a position of political power is a psychopath, he or she can create an epidemic of psychopathology in people who are not, essentially, psychopathic...Under such conditions, no area of social life can develop normally, whether in economics, culture, science, technology, administration, etc. Pathocracy progressively paralyzes everything.”

Andrzej Łobaczewski, Political Ponerology